24 April 69

Harold:

I have your letters of 18 and 21 April with comments on Epstein. I'll answer things in the order that you raise them.

I hope things go good with Lincoln. All I can do now is keep my fingers crossed for you.

Your "agent" in London might be useful for checking Dawnay's work, which needs checking badly. He now says that Mrs Thomas (Pax Hotel) saw Ray on TV after the non-trial and identified him as the Sneyd who stayed with her. That does not tie in with her description of him as having very short hair with tight curls. When she saw the picture of Ray that was taken in Memphis during the transfer from London, she said the hair of the ~~pixxx~~ man in the picture was too long to be her Sneyd. Also there are a couple of news stories (very early after the arrest) which conflict on this point (the length of hair).:

> NY Times (9June 69): "When arrested, Ray was wearing a light raincoat, a sports jacket and grey trousers. His hair had been cropped short ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ and he was wearing glasses but otherwise he had not attempted to disguise his features.
>
> NO Times-Pic. (11 June): (describing Ray at his first appearance in court) " Ray looked the picture of holiday health-- well tanned, his straight black hair combed back and tinged with grey at the temples.

Moreover, all of the initial reports say the Ray was arrested while in transit from Lisbon. The story did not change until Ian Colvin wrote about Sneyd being at the Pax. Even then, the story changed only in the press, i.e. was not based on official statements. As late as November (I think) Scotland Yard was still saying that Ray was arrested in transit from Lisbon. I have a copy of a letter from Scotlan d Yard to Dawnay saying that. I also have a letter BEA airlines saing he came in from Lisbon that morning.

Those are the most substantial things that make me believe there were two Sneyds. Until those anomalies are cleared, I shall continue to think that there were two.

As for two arrests, I am not convinced, but I think it possible.

I said Nicol for Joseph D. Nicol in connection with the unknown marks on the base of CE 543. I did not visualize this happening on 22 Nov., but I did make a fundamental error in assuming that the three sets of marks were made at the same time. I cannot know the lapse of time between each act that caused a set of marks, and for that reason shall not treat it in the body of my article. I may, however, include it as a clearly marked speculative appendix, for I do think that is how the marks were made. I would like to avoid any guess work, however, so I may omit it entirely and simply issue a private unpublishe analysis to "buffs".

I am not going into details of reconstruction; there are too many pitfalls there. I'll stick to what can be positively known. That in itself is enough to blow the whole mess.

The key to everything now is to determine how the case shaoulders were dented-- reall, that is everthing. I am sure that my account on p.8 is the right way, and we must find a rifle that does this or adjust some rifle that doesn't. The adjustment is slight, natural; not doctoring. When I get clip and cartridges I can do it myself and will.

The next most important thing is to compare the difference between the primers of cases that have fired bullets and cases that were fired empty. If I am right about Frazier, then that was his reason. The primers on fired bulleted rounds will (I think) make differnt microscopic marks from the primers of cases that were fired empty.

I asked Nichols, and I'll ask you. When you can, fire six cases as follows and send them to me:

1) Fire three bulleted cartridges. Mark the fired cases 1,2, and 3.
2) Pull the bullets from three cartridges, dump the powder, and fire the primers of the empty cases. Mark these 1E,2E and 3E.

Try to set up each case in the chamber so that the "6.5" that is printed on the base is in the bottom of the chamber when you fire. This will give me a reference point from which to start a comparison.

Eject the cases onto a blanket or something else soft, so that the primers will not be damaged. Don't ease the case out, though. Eject it naturally.

I can set up microscopes for comparison, and perhaps can even get pictures of the magnified primers. Our biology or physics labs have the equipment.

Fire these tests consecutively-- no other firing in between. xxxxxxxxxx Also send me the serial number of your rifle.

If I can find the equipment, I'll try this on a rifle of comarable quality and age-- not M-C since I don't have loaded rounds. I'll be going to Ithaca, N.Y. in a few weeks and know a gunsmith there who may be able to gat ammo for me.

Come to think of it, I did not ask Nichols for this type of test. I shall later.

All this is necessary to determine Frazier's motive for firing empty cases for comparison. I don't think that cases which fired bullets would have compared microscopically. The pressure difference is too great.

I will not come to Washington unless I can be sure of seeing the three cases and two test cases. Nichols is getting photos, from the Archives, and that may do. I doubt whether I would issue this article until I have seen the cases myself. The whole issue scares hell out of me, and I cant afford to be wrong; it is far too serious considering the charges that I am laying at Frazier's feet. I am going to try to get the best people in the country to scrutinize this with all the skepticism their integrity allows them to muster. I said in the introduction that the issue was completely settled, foolproof. It has to be just that; it has to stand the most severe test. If it is false, even a pin prick will deflate it. If true, you couldn't break it with an axe.

Don't go for Archive pictures yet. Let's see what Nichols gets first. My finances are down to nothing, so I can't help at all in that regard.

If you go to Washington, by all means go and see the cases and the test cases. Get other people to see them too, if you can. If they are phonies, the best way to protect them from damage is to have people look at them and remember what they see. Even snapshot photos of them are useful for that purpose. The cases cannot be switched, but they can be made to look as

thought they had been fired, in spite of the dents. What could we say, for example, if the cases displayed three positive indications that they had not been fired, and three positive indications that they had been fired. Confusion would take over, and that is as useful to them as suppression-- more useful, perhaps.

I think too that I will treat in summary fashion CE 399 and the fragment from the car. Both show evidence of firing from the M-C rifle. Both surely are plants. CE 399 is a cream puff; I'll handle it with summary treatment and reference to others who smashed it (Weisberg, Marcus, Salandria, Meagher, et. al.)
The fragment too is just a feather in the breeze. I need only mention at the end of the article that it was Frazier who "found" it. I have not yet reviewed material on that fragment. By the time I have finished with Frazier, anything he touched will be suspect.

I think I'll leave Hoover in the background; like the breeze that blows the feather, you see the feather but never the breeze.
Photographing the inside of cases for comparison will be no problem. Just get a metalworker to cut the cases lengthwise and lay them open. You will see everyhting then.

I took a chance and wrote to Josiah Thompson for any other photos that he may have taken of the cases. I did not tell him what for. If he comes through with them, it could be a great windfall.

LOOK magazine in Nichols' own. We can't be in on that, for they want only a short piece. Nichols will give all help in preparing tests and photos, but LOOK is all his. Apparently they had already settled what he would write.

Epstein is a soulless crumb. You need not persuade me of anything about him, for he is the worst type of scum that there is-- all covered over with sugar. If this thing of mine works out, we'LL smash him along with the rest of the assholes that he licks. What a tongue!
Does his wrist really hang loose? I thought so on my own, but I know nothing substantial.

I offended Sprague badly with my criticism of his handling of the Murray photos (with fragment of skull on the grass). He rapped me very hard, and it may be that I deserved it for jumping to the conclusion that it was his doing. I have not yet had time to apologize, but I will.
Anyway, I still think that he is doing bad work. Schoener puts him on the other side-- working for them.
I think Fensterwald's business will do us no good either.

Still,

Dick

Bernabei